

Last updated May 2017

Thornton Creek Natural Drainage Systems

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) bringing this project to your neighborhood?

This project will help reduce polluted runoff from entering the creeks and lakes in your neighborhood that flow into the Puget Sound. It's estimated that more than 12 million pounds of pollution are carried into our water systems by stormwater every year; SPU wants to build natural drainage systems (NDS) to help solve this problem.

What are the project goals?

- To improve water quality and help manage stormwater flows by constructing natural drainage systems by the side of the road in your neighborhood.
- To improve your neighborhood by providing street trees, calming traffic, and reducing localized flooding where possible.



SPU is planning to build natural drainage systems in the planting strips of several blocks in your neighborhood. This project is part of the [Natural Drainage Systems Program in the Plan to Protect Seattle's Waterways](#).

How does SPU decide what blocks to choose?

SPU picks potential project locations by working with other city departments (example: planned street or pedestrian improvements) and by looking for areas where this project may address a flooding problem.

The final project location depends on a lot of factors:

- How much stormwater can be managed
- Location of nearby adverse conditions (steep slopes, high groundwater, contaminated sites)
- Potential impacts to existing trees
- Existing soil conditions
- Location and condition of existing utilities
- Community input
- Width of existing public right-of-way
- Presence of driveways
- Existing parking congestion and availability of off-street parking
- Project construction, operation, and maintenance cost

**What will I see on the side of my street?**

Because this project is built with growing plants, the way they look will change over time and take up to two years to fully develop. The grasses, shrubs, and trees installed at construction will grow and change as the garden matures. In the first few years, the stormwater collected in the natural drainage system will be more visible. The plants will also look different during the different seasons of the year.

Will I see water in the natural drainage systems?

During storms, each project site will temporarily hold up to 12 inches of water and then drain within 24 hours after the rain ends. When there are back-to-back storms or a larger storm, the water level will rise and fall, which is a sign that the project is functioning properly.

What if it rains so much that the project site overflows?

The natural drainage systems are designed to completely drain within 24 hours of the storm passing. If there is more water than the project can hold at one time, you will see any excess stormwater flow out of the system and into the nearest pipe, ditch, or storm drain.

What happens if the site does not drain within 24 hours?

Seattle Public Utilities' Operation Response Center maintains a 24/7 hotline for people to call and report drainage issues. If the completed project near your home isn't draining properly or requires maintenance, please call: (206) 386-1800.

How will this work affect existing plants and trees?

This project is likely to affect some trees on your street, but we will replace any 1 tree removed with 2 new trees. Some smaller or unhealthy trees may need to be replaced or transplanted. Protecting trees during construction is a priority.

How much input do you want from residents?

Community involvement is important to us and we will consult with you during location selection, design, and construction. We want to understand specific concerns and interests from you and your neighbors.

Who is responsible for maintenance of the project?

SPU is responsible for all maintenance needs of this project including watering, weeding, and general upkeep. SPU will also prune trees and shrubs as needed. You will not be asked to pay for or perform any maintenance. In fact, it is important for residents to stay out of the project area to maintain their function. Plants will mature over time and the mix of plants will likely change, but this doesn't affect its function.

Will this project cause my basement to flood or drainage problems around my house?

This project is designed to carry stormwater straight into the ground, not toward yards or basements. SPU uses soil testing information to locate these projects only where the conditions are good for infiltrating stormwater straight down into the ground. If needed, the design of the site may provide an underground liner for extra protection.

How will this project affect street parking?

This project is likely to affect street parking. Seattle Public Utilities knows that parking and access from the street to the sidewalk are very important to residents. We will carefully consider and address the impacts to parking in every potential project location. We also look at alleys and assess the condition and availability of off-street parking nearby.

Will this project attract mosquitoes?

This project will not attract mosquitoes. Mosquitoes need stagnant water (found in bird baths, old tires, dog water bowls, etc.) and natural drainage systems are designed to constantly drain and keep water moving.

For more information on mosquitoes and prevention, please visit:

www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/westnile.aspx or
www.seattle.gov/environment/WestNile.htm.

**Will my children and pets be safe when the water is collected and stored here?**

Natural drainage systems are designed with safety in mind. They will typically drain within 24 hours following a storm and in most cases, it will be even faster.

Stay in touch

SPU is happy to answer questions and provide any information you need to be informed about this project and its impacts to you and your neighborhood.

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